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ACTION ARA-01

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-15 AMAD-01 CIAE-00 C-01 DODE-00 HA-09
H-01 INRE-00 INR-01 L-03 ADS-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
OMB-01 PA-01 PM-01 PRS-01 P-01 SNP-01 SP-01
SS-01 TRSE-00 T-01 USIE-00 /041W
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P 122115Z FEB 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8300
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01552

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV. PREL. CO. VE
SUBJECT: [REDACTED]
ON THE COUP ATTEMPT, POLITICS AND CONGRESS

B1

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: [REDACTED]

B1

CREDITS A COMBINATION OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND
CORRUPTION/MISGOVERNANCE WITH TRIGGERING THE FEBRUARY 4
COUP ATTEMPT. HE ALSO CITES CAP'S ALLEGEDLY EXCESSIVE
INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY AND MISHANDLING OF THE QUESTION
OF THE FRONTIER WITH COLOMBIA IN THIS REGARD. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] ACKNOWLEDGING THE RECENT UPSURGE IN CALDERA'S
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POPULARITY, CAUTIONS THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS
ALMOST TWO YEARS OFF. [REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT ANOTHER COUP
ATTEMPT IN THE NEAR FUTURE IS GOOD POSSIBILITY, UNLESS THE
GOV QUICKLY LEARNS HOW TO PROJECT TO THE PUBLIC THAT IT IS
DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH NATIONAL PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

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3. POLOFF MET WITH [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] ON FEBRUARY 12 TO DISCUSS THE
RECENT COUP ATTEMPT AND CURRENT POLITICS. [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] SURPRISED MANY OBSERVERS,

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 11 FEB 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 03 AUG 2006 200503206

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THE FEBRUARY 4 COUP ATTEMPT

4. [REDACTED] CREDITS A COMBINATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES UNIQUE IN VENEZUELA'S DEMOCRATIC HISTORY WITH GENERATING THE FEBRUARY COUP ATTEMPT. FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN CAP'S SECOND ADMINISTRATION, THE COUNTRY EXPERIENCED BOTH ECONOMIC HARDSHIP, HARDER TO ACCEPT FOLLOWING YEARS OF RISING INCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS, AND LARGE-SCALE CORRUPTION AND MISGOVERNANCE, MAGNIFIED IN THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION BY ALMOST COMPLETE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (IN CONTRAST TO THE INDIRECT BUT EXTENSIVE CENSORSHIP EXERCISED BY THE PREVIOUS LUSINCHI GOVERNMENT). EVEN

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WORSE, THE MIDDLE CLASS, WHICH IN EFFECT MONOPOLIZES WORKING-LEVEL POSITIONS IN THE MEDIA AND CONTRIBUTES MOST OF THE ARMED FORCES' OFFICERS, BORE MUCH OF THIS HARDSHIP. OTHER, SOMEWHAT LESS IMPORTANT FACTORS WERE CAP'S "EXCESSIVE" ATTENTION TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS ("EVEN WHEN HE WAS HERE PHYSICALLY, HE WAS SOMEWHERE ELSE MENTALLY"), WHICH PROJECTED AN IMAGE OF INSENSITIVITY TO THE PROBLEMS OF VENEZUELAN, AND HIS "MISHANDLING" OF THE QUESTION OF THE FRONTIER WITH COLOMBIA IN THE GULF OF VENEZUELA. THIS "MISHANDLING" IN TURN CONSISTED OF AN APPEARANCE OF HASTE IN RESOLVING THIS "AGE-OLD" PROBLEM AND "INDECISIVENESS" AS DEMONSTRATED IN THE "HEMING AND HAWING" THE PRESIDENT ENGAGED IN AFTER HIS JANUARY 10 MARACAIBO ADDRESS. BOTH THE HASTE AND THE INDECISIVENESS RAISED THE SPECTRE OF YET ANOTHER "GIVE-AWAY" TO COLOMBIA. THE COUP ATTEMPT WAS THEREFORE NO SURPRISE, SINCE THE COUP PLOTTERS' RESPONSE TO NATIONAL REALITY SIMPLY MIRRORED THE DISCONTENT OF SO MANY OF THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS, BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE ARMED FORCES.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

5. [REDACTED] BELIEVES THAT ANOTHER COUP ATTEMPT IN A SHORT TIME IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY, UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT

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BEGINS TO PROJECT AT LEAST THE APPEARANCE OF DEALING WITH
NATIONAL PROBLEMS. THE FIRST STEP SHOULD BE A WHOLESALE
CABINET CHANGE -- BUT A CHANGE OF FACES, NOT POLICIES.

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	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03	ADS-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SNP-01	SP-01
	SS-01	TRSE-00	T-01	USIE-00	/041W		
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P 122115Z FEB 92
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8301
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 01552

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, CO, VE

SUBJECT: [REDACTED]

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CALDERA

6. [REDACTED] CHARACTERIZED CALDERA'S CHOICE OF VENUE FOR HIS FEBRUARY 4 INTERVENTION AS "INAPPROPRIATE" BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THE BOOST IT GAVE TO HIS PUBLIC IMAGE AND POLITICAL ATTRACTIVENESS. WHEREAS BEFORE THE COUP THE RESPECT MANY HAD FOR CALDERA TRANSLATED INTO RELATIVELY FEW VOTES, HE WOULD PROBABLY RECEIVE A MAJORITY OF VOTES IF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WERE HELD TOMORROW. ON THE OTHER HAND, [REDACTED] ALMOST TWO YEARS WILL ELAPSE BEFORE THAT ELECTION. MEANWHILE, HE ADMITTED, HE

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SEES NO POSSIBILITY OF A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN FERNANDEZ AND CALDERA. WHAT BEGAN AS A PERSONALITY CONFLICT OWING TO MISPERCEPTIONS OF EACH'S POLITICAL INTENTIONS HAS BECOME AN IDEOLOGICAL ONE AS WELL. CALDERA, [REDACTED] OBSERVED, "HAS NOTHING NEW TO OFFER VENEZUELA, JUST THE STALE IDEAS OF THE PAST." WHAT HE SYMBOLIZES AT THE MOMENT IS HONESTY AND CARING, BUT THESE "VIRTUES" WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO ELECT HIM IN TWO YEARS. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] BUT REALIZED THAT THE FORMER PRESIDENT WOULD PROBABLY OPT TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE. IN THAT CASE, [REDACTED] NOTED, CALDERA WOULD PROBABLY RECEIVE ALL THE FUNDING HE NEEDED FROM AD, WHICH WOULD PERCEIVE TWO STRONG COPEI CANDIDACIES AS THE BEST GUARANTEE OF ITS OWN VICTORY. [REDACTED] ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIALISM (MAS), WHICH IS INCREASINGLY MANIFESTING ITS READINESS TO BACK AN INDEPENDENT CALDERA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY, WOULD IN PRACTICE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ANNOUNCE ANY SUCH DECISION UNTIL NEXT YEAR, SINCE IN THE MEANTIME IT IS LIKELY TO FORM A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF ALLIANCES WITH COPEI FOR THIS YEAR'S LOCAL ELECTIONS.

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7.

SAID

THAT A PARTY'S WHIP OR CAUCUS LEADER IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN DETERMINING A PARTY'S POSITION ON MOST LEGISLATION. IN COPEI, FOR INSTANCE, THE WHIP PRESENTS A STATUS REPORT ON PENDING LEGISLATION TO THE PARTY'S WEEKLY

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING, RECOMMENDING WHICH UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL VOTES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED POLITICAL AND, THEREFORE, DECIDED IN ADVANCE BY THE COMMITTEE. SUCH "POLITICAL" DECISIONS IN COPEI ARE TAKEN IN REGARD TO ONLY 2 PERCENT OF ALL PARLIAMENTARY VOTES, [REDACTED] OBSERVED. IT COULD HARDLY BE OTHERWISE, HE CONTINUED, SINCE THE PARTY'S CONGRESSMEN HAVE TO CAST AS MANY AS 50 VOTES ON A GIVEN DAY. THE USUAL PROCEDURE, HE NOTED, IS FOR THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN IN QUESTION TO ADVISE THE WHIP ON A GIVEN VOTE; THE WHIP THEN INDICATES TO THE MEMBERS HOW TO VOTE, AND THEY DO SO ACCORDINGLY. IN THIS SENSE, PARTY DISCIPLINE IS OBSERVED, BUT THE WHIP AND THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN HAVE PLENTY OF LEEWAY. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] RECOUNTED, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MAJOR BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS USED TO INVITE [REDACTED] SOME COPEI COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN TO MEET WITH THEM EVERY TWO WEEKS OR SO. THE BUSINESSMEN'S PURPOSE WAS TO "LOBBY" THEM ON PENDING, AND TO RECOMMEND/REQUEST THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW, LEGISLATION.

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8.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF EACH YEAR'S FIRST REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PARTY'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION. SKOL

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